D. AREA AND FACILITY CONCEPTS AND STANDARDS

A well designed parks and recreation system must account for the needs of its users. The standards adopted by the City must, therefore, reflect its uniqueness and represent the interest and desires of its varied users.

Standards

Standards provide a means for determining the needed acreage of parks as well as the community's needs for equipment and facilities. Parks and recreation standards are typically expressed in terms of acres of land dedicated for parks and recreation use per unit of population. Applying the acreage standards to the current and projected populations and comparing them to the existing acreage produces the additional amount of parkland that is needed. A similar approach may be used to quantify the extent of additional equipment and facilities needed to meet the standards both now and in the future.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) published the *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines* to establish nationally applicable criteria for the provision of parks and recreation facilities. These standards serve as a guide for parks and recreation planning. While general standards are useful it is important to establish standards that are based upon local considerations such as participation trends, user characteristics, demographics, climate and natural environment. Leisure and recreation values are unique to each municipality and therefore the standards should represent the interests and desires of the community.

To ensure the city's interests are met, national standards were customized based on local characteristics and community input. Considerations in the development of the acreage and facility standards for the City of Friendswood include:

- A projected 2020 population of 50,000 persons. This rate of growth indicates an increasing demand for parks and recreation facilities.

- The median age of the population is 37 years, meaning that there are increased needs for active and passive recreation facilities such as playing fields and hiking trails. It is also important to note that 26% of the population is 44-64, creating facility needs for mature adults.

- The city of Friendswood will continue to be a popular destination for raising families. In addition, the "baby boomers" coming into retirement age, there is a significant percent of the population that is under 14 years old that has an increased need for active recreational facilities.

The development of standards is largely dependent upon local population characteristics. As a result of the demographics of the City, facilities must be planned for these each segment of the population. In contrast to senior population needs for passive facilities, young adults and youth demand facilities and equipment for active recreation uses such as ball fields and courts. However, mature adults are typically more interested in leisure recreation and passive activities such as walking, bird watching and nature observance.

Park Facilities

The classifications of park types are displayed in **Table 4.1, Park Classifications,** attached after this section. The classification system includes parks ranging in size and type from mini/pocket and neighborhood parks to community and linear parks, plus special use facilities. The table reflects the intended use, relative service area and desirable size, density, and preferred characteristics for each park type.

Acreage standard for park types per 1,000 persons		
Park Type	**NRPA Standard**	**Recommended Standard**
Mini	.25-.5 acres	-
Neighborhood	1.0-2.0 acres	2.5 acres
Community	5.0-8.0 acres	2.0-3.0 acres
Large	Variable	-
Special	Variable	Variable
Parkways and Ornamental	Variable	Variable
Reservations	Variable	Variable
Area per 1,000 persons	11.25-20.5 acres	4.5-5.5 acres

The above recommended standard of 4.5 – 5.5 acres of park land to each 1,000 residents is considered a desirable acreage to be achieved. For a "built-out" population in the range of 50,000 persons, there will be a balanced park system of neighborhood and community parks which will be supplemented by school and private facilities, as well as country and regional facilities. The City, if the projected population growth comes to fruition, will be built-out in approximately ten years. Steps must be taken now in anticipation of such growth; proactively, not reactively.

Displayed in **Table 4.2, Facility Standards**, attached after this section, are the standards for major facilities which reflect the recommended size and dimensions, orientation, demand, service area, and location for each. Other factors to consider are the size, shape and orientation of the site; pedestrian and vehicular access; adjoining and nearby land uses; development constraints such as slope and soil type; on- and off- site environmental impacts; and the anticipated use of the park.

Activity/Facility	TORP Standard	NRPA Standard	Needed Facilities
Basketball	6	12	15 to 17
Tennis Courts	26	30	20
Baseball	8	12	13 (baseball only)
Softball	7	12	6 to 8 (softball only)
Football	3	3	2
Soccer	3.3	6	20
Playgrounds	28 acres	-	17 to 19 play structures
Picnic tables	61	-	70 to 80
Swimming pools	3	3	2 public pools
Volleyball	N/A	12	6 to 8
Trails	6.2	-	As many as possible

Displayed in Table 4.3, Equipment Standards, are the recommended minimum equipment standards for each classification of park. Theses standards may be used to bring all parks to an equivalent level of service.

Table 4.3, Equipment Standards

Equipment	Pocket Park	Neighborhood Park	Community Park
Basketball Court	0.00	0.13	0.15
Bicycle Rack	0.50	0.50	0.10
Drinking Fountain	0.50	0.50	0.25
Exercise Circuit	0.00	0.00	1.00
Grills/BBQ Pits	0.50	0.50	0.50

Park Bench	2.00	2.00	0.50
Parking Spaces	0.00	4.00	6.00
Parking Lot Landscape Island	0.00	0.07	0.07
Pavilion, Covered	0.00	0.50	0.10
Picnic Table	2.00	2.00	1.00
Playground Equipment	5.00-10.00	15.00-20.00	60.00-65.00
Restrooms	0.00	0.00	0.05
Trash Cans/Enclosures	0.50	0.50	0.50

Since user characteristics tend to fluctuate by season and type of user, these ratios may warrant adjustment. As parks are developed, it will be prudent for the City to conduct observations or document user rates and adjust the standards and priorities.

Facility Recommendations

Following are the prototypical facilities and improvements for each park classification. Since each site is unique in terms of its size, shape, orientation, ingress/egress, abutting land uses, slope, and use, adjustments may be warranted during concept planning and site design.

Neighborhood

A neighborhood park serves the residents primarily within a one-quarter mile walking distance and, therefore, must be designed to accommodate such use. Safe access, a central location, and pedestrian linkages are key factors in developing neighborhood parks. The site must be able to accommodate both active and passive recreations uses for all ages. User input should be included in the design process to ensure the park is compatible with the adjacent neighborhood and accounts for the needs of its users.

Recommended facilities and improvements for neighborhood parks include:

- Park identification sign viewable from all public rights-of-way;
- Off-site directional signage;
- Street signs for “Children at Play;”
- ADA accessible curb cuts and pedestrian crosswalks;

- Sidewalks or walking paths around the park perimeter;
- Trees placed to provide shade;
- Landscaping and/or natural vegetation;
- Drinking fountains;
- Lighting;
- Playground equipment for 15 to 20 children;
- Tot lot separate from playground equipment;
- School age and pre-school age equipment;
- Multi-purpose play area;
- Benches;
- On-street parking;
- Garbage/recycle bins;
- Picnic tables with small shelters and grills;
- Picnic shelter with tables, lighting and electricity for 25 to 40 persons;
- Perimeter screening and fencing for neighborhood buffering;
- Irrigation system; and
- Restrooms.

Community Parks

Community parks are intended for residents within a one-mile radius, but they are also available to persons throughout the community. The facilities and improvements in community parks must be planned and designed for heavy use by persons of all ages. Community parks must provide for both active and passive recreational use. Where feasible, community parks should be located adjacent to a greenway or pathway so residents may readily access the park by walking or bicycling. User participation is particularly critical in designing community parks due to the diversity of user interests.

Recommended facilities and improvements for community parks include:

- Park identification sign within view of all public rights-of-way;
- Off-site directional signage;
- Street signs for "Children at Play;"
- ADA accessible curb cuts and pedestrian crosswalks;
- Sidewalks along street frontage and between activity areas;
- Trees placed to provide shade;
- Landscaping and/or natural vegetation;
- Drinking fountains;
- Security Lighting;
- Playground equipment for 60 to 65 children;
- Tot lot separate from playground equipment;
- Concrete surface for a general play area;
- Picnic tables with small shelters;
- Benches;

- On-street parking;
- Garbage/recycle bins;
- Picnic shelters(s) with tables, lighting and electricity for 60 to 75 persons;
- Covered pavilion;
- Perimeter screening and fencing for neighborhood buffering;
- Irrigation system for picnic areas and other public use areas;
- Restrooms;
- Fencing for ball fields, athletic courts and secured areas;
- Recreation or multi-use center;
- Tennis courts;
- Basketball/multi-purpose courts;
- Softball and little league fields with a field house and concession stnd;
- Soccer/football fields;
- Sand volleyball court;
- Swimming pool; and
- Walking/jogging paths with mileage markers.

Linear Parks and Greenways

Linear parks are usually developed along a natural resource. The benefits of linear parks include the preservation of valuable open spaces and natural habitats; an environment for walking, jogging and bicycling; a corridor linking neighborhoods to parks, schools, and shopping areas; and passive recreational opportunities. Linear parks may also be a buffer between land uses. Design standards for linear parks are relatively loose to allow maximum use of the natural environment in the design. The exiting topography, severity of flooding and unique natural

features is often determining design factors. Linear parks with widths of less than 15 usable feet should be kept to a minimum. Corridor widths 25 feet and wider give flexibility in design and are encouraged.

Recommended facilities and improvements for linear parks include:

- Park identification sign every 1,320 feet along public rights-of-ways;
- Off-site directional signage;
- Interpretive signage;
- Pedestrian and bicycle crossing signs at street intersections;
- ADA accessible curb cuts and pedestrian crosswalks;
- Trees and shade structures;
- Landscaping and natural vegetation;
- Drinking fountains;
- Security Lighting;
- Benches;
- Picnic tables with small shelters;
- Off-street parking at trailhead locations;
- Garbage bins;
- Perimeter screening/fencing for property buffering;
- Native vegetation areas;
- Restrooms a the trailhead; and
- Walking/jogging paths with mileage markers (a combination of hard and soft surfaces is desirable).

Special Use Parks and Facilities

Special use areas and parks are for specialized recreation activities. Typical examples of special use areas include: historical areas, nature centers, zoos, conservatories, arboretums, arenas, amphitheaters, plazas or community squares. There are no specific standards for size or acreage since each community will vary.

Site Selection Criteria

Various factors influence the siting of parks. Among the criteria that influence site selection are the surrounding land use characteristics (e.g. type, density, scale of development), the size and anticipated use of the area and any development constraints and barrier (e.g. arterial roadways and other streets, railroads, waterways and ditches). General site selection criteria and principal considerations for park and recreation facilities include:

Topography

- The park should have appropriate slopes and contouring to accommodate its intended uses.
- Some topographic relief (even if created through cut and fill) is desirable to create visual interest and offer opportunities for other activities.
- There must be sufficient slope to allow for adequate storm water runoff from ball fields and other developed areas.
- Desirable views into and away from the site should be preserved and protected.

Soils

- The topsoil should be suitable for turf grasses and trees.
- The area should be protected from soil erosion during construction and designed to avoid erosion upon completion (e.g. mulches, retaining walls).

Vegetation

- Natural or landscaped vegetation should include grass areas and trees with hardy, low maintenance species preferred for planted vegetation.
- Xeriscaping (use of local native vegetation) is preferred to minimize required irrigation and maintenance.
- Irrigation systems should be provided for intensively used areas such as playing fields and landscaped areas.
- Significant individual specimens or unique wildlife habitats are desirable.
- Interpretive signage should be provided to identify species and varieties of natural vegetation to educate the public.

Access and Location

- All parks should be readily accessible and convenient for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and disabled persons.
- Parks should be accessible from collector streets rather than arterial roadways.
- Parks should be located adjacent to paths and greenways to provide linkage to neighborhood and other areas of the community.